

# British South Africa: an introduction to research

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## Brief Timeline of British South Africa:

- 1652 - The Dutch East India Company established a victualling station at the Cape of Good Hope, at what would become Cape Town
- 1795 - British forces seized Cape Colony from the Dutch, giving it back in 1804, and taking it again in 1806.
- 1814 - Following the end of the Napoleonic Wars, the Cape Colony was formally ceded to Great Britain and became an integral part of the British Empire
- 1910 - The Union of South Africa came into being with the unification of the Cape Colony, the Natal Colony, the Transvaal, and the Orange River Colony
- 1961 - South Africa became an independent republic and withdrew from the British Commonwealth



## ESTATE RECORDS:

### Content:

- Name
- birthdate and place, age
- death date, marital status
- Parents' names, spouse, children
- Name of executors
- Will, if there was one created

- 1834 to the present
- Contain death notices (different from civil death certificate), wills and other legal papers
- Highly accurate—they had to be proved in a court of law
- Can be in Afrikaans or English
- Each estate file is numbered by a registration number sometimes with date of probate, i.e. S3229 or 3016/1961
- Can be found in FamilySearch indexes, indexes from the National Archives of South Africa
- FamilySearch catalog has many records—look under the probate records for relevant province.
- Usually several pages: cover page, death notice, will, etc.

## CHURCH RECORDS

- Dutch Reformed (records begin in 1665), official church until 1778
- Church of South Africa (Anglican), records begin 1806.
- Other churches: Methodist, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic
- Many filmed by FamilySearch, some indexes
- Original registers held in various archives throughout South Africa

## CIVIL REGISTRATION

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- Indexes on FamilySearch, National Archives of South Africa (NAAIRS search)
- Record content: [https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/South\\_Africa\\_Civil\\_Registration](https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/South_Africa_Civil_Registration)

### Civil Registration Beginning Dates

Province	Births	Marriages	Deaths
Cape	1895	1700	1895
Natal	1868	1845	1888
Transvaal	1901	1870	1901
Orange Free State	1903	1848	1903

## CEMETERY RECORDS

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- Burial registers at most municipal cemeteries
- Arranged by year, give name, date of burial, age at death, location of grave
- FamilySearch catalog
- National Archives of South Africa GEN database (Data of the South African Genealogical Society on Gravestones)

## NEWSPAPERS

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- Some births, marriages, divorces, and deaths printed in local newspapers
- South African Newspaper Extracts: <https://www.eggssa.org/newspapers/>
- South African News Archive: <https://www.newsbank.com/libraries/colleges-universities/solutions/resources-location/south-african-news-archive>
- NewspaperArchive has some papers for Johannesburg

### Useful Links:

- Guide to South African genealogy: [http://web.archive.org/web/20081208085144/http://www.genealogyworld.net/Tracing/tracing\\_2.html](http://web.archive.org/web/20081208085144/http://www.genealogyworld.net/Tracing/tracing_2.html)
- Matthew Bode's YouTube Channel has some excellent how-to videos on South African research: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zf-INjXkeoQ>
- National Archives of South Africa: <http://www.national.archsrch.gov.za/>

## South African National Archives (NAAIRS Search: (National Automated Archival Information Retrieval System)

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- RSA database: All Archives Repositories and National Registers of non-public records.
- Click on NAAIRS help for step-by-step instructions for how to search, it's a bit tricky.
- No images are available online from the archives website—original records can be accessed at the archives in person, or from the FamilySearch catalog.